

Week 1

April 4, 2021

Sermon Text: Genesis 22; Hebrews 11

Sermon Notes:

* Community Groups will start the week of April 11.

Questions for Reflection:

Read 1 Peter 3:15-17. This passage refers to the hope that is in you. What is this hope?

Read 1 John 5:10-13. What do these verses say that assures us of salvation? Does God want us to have assurance in our salvation?

If you are not sure that you have this hope, take a moment to read Appendix 1—"The Good News of Salvation"—before moving on.

The goal for today is to spend some time writing out your personal testimony. If you would like a guide for writing your testimony, you might consider the step-by-step instructions found in Appendix 2.

What was my life like before I received Jesus Christ?



How did I come to receive Christ?

What happened after I received Christ? How did my life change?

SOAP Journal:

Title:

Date:

Bible Reading: 1 John 1-2

SOAP Text:

(Choose the text to SOAP from the Bible reading)

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KNOWING & ABIDING

Questions for Reflection:

Read 2 Timothy 1:8, 12b. Do you have the same confidence as Paul did about knowing God personally? Explain

What should our attitude be concerning our personal testimony?
How should I feel when talking about my faith?

Is this an accurate description of my attitude when sharing about my faith? Why or why not?

* Continue working on the step-by step process of writing your personal testimony.

SOAP Journal:

Title:

Date:

Bible Reading: 1 John 3

SOAP Text:

(Choose the text to SOAP from the Bible reading)

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ABIDING & OBEYING

Questions for Reflection:

The Bible teaches that a true believer obeys God in his life.

Read 1 John 2:3-6. What do you think about what these verses say?

Read 1 John 3:24. What does it mean to abide in God?

What evidence exists to prove that I am abiding in God?

What are some practical steps you can take today to abide in God?

SOAP Journal:

Title:

Date:

Bible Reading: **1 John 4-5**

SOAP Text:

(Choose the text to SOAP from the Bible reading)

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Appendix 1:

THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION

Does God exist? What is the purpose of life? Does God really love me? Is there really life after death? Why do I feel so alone?

Life is full of questions! And people have been looking for answers to these and many other questions for many years. Whatever you are struggling with, there is an answer—the answer is Jesus! The Bible says that “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)

Jesus himself said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10b). You see, we are created by God for a purpose—to fellowship with Him. It has always been God’s desire to have a personal relationship with you, but our sinfulness made this impossible. The Bible tells us,

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12)

It is our sinfulness that separates us from fellowship with God. Even though we have been alienated from God because of our sin, He wants to reconcile His relationship with us. This is accomplished through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross—the perfect payment for sin!

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:6-8)

It is hard to imagine that God loves us so much that He would be willing to sacrifice His Son to pay the penalty for our sin, but that is exactly what He did! When we trust in Jesus, we are reconciled with God forever!

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:10-11)

We receive eternal life when we are reconciled to God. Does this seem to good to be true? Is it really possible to be made right with God by merely trusting in His Son for salvation?

How can our relationship with God be restored?

“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:18-19)

Is salvation really a free gift?

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

Jesus Christ is the One—the only One—through whom we receive this gift of reconciliation and eternal life. If you want to trust in Jesus Christ, you must confess that He is your Lord and believe in your heart that after He was crucified, He rose from the dead and is alive in heaven today. The Bible says,

“...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” (Romans 10:9-10)

Once you trust in Jesus you have a new relationship with Him. It is very important to maintain a right relationship with God. This study guide will help you grow in that relationship, but you also need the input of other believers. Be sure to let one of the pastors know about your decision to follow Christ!

Appendix 2:

PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY

As Christians, we do not just tell our story because it's "the right thing to do." We do it because it's biblical and because God moves when we take steps of faith to share with others.

There are many accounts in the Bible of people sharing about how God transformed their lives. One of the most well-known testimonies is told by the apostle Paul. Paul went from persecuting Christians to following Jesus, starting churches, and writing over half of the New Testament. Take a look at his testimony before a crowd in Acts 22:1-21 to understand the essential parts of telling your story.

1. Paul opens with a brief history of his life (vv. 1–3)
2. Paul tells about his life before Christ (vv. 4-5)
3. Paul explains how he came to know Christ (vv. 6-13)
4. Paul tells about his life after coming to know Christ (vv. 14-18)
5. Paul closes with his obedience to Christ (vv. 19-21)

The 5 Parts of Your Personal Testimony

After looking at Paul's example of a testimony, you can get a better understanding of a good framework for telling your own story. Take a look at these five parts of a personal testimony. As you move through this list, journal your answers to the questions in each section.

1. The Opening

Identify a theme you can use to frame your story. What did your life revolve around (e.g. relationships, your reputation, success) that God used to help bring you to Him? Briefly illustrate how that influenced your life.

2. Your Life Before Christ

Paint a picture of what your life was like before you came to Christ. Do not dwell too much on, or brag about, past sins. Share only the details that relate to your theme — just enough to show your need for Christ. Think through these questions:

- What about my life before Christ will relate most to the non-Christians I know?
- What did my life revolve around? Where did I get my security, identity or happiness from?
- How did those things begin to let me down?

3. How You Came to Christ

Give the details about why and how you became a Christian. Communicate in such a way that the person you are talking with, and anyone who overhears you, can understand how they can become a Christian too. Even if your listeners are not ready for that, God could use your story and explanation of the gospel to draw them to Himself in the future. Think through these questions:

- When was the first time I heard the gospel? What were my initial reactions?
- When and why did my perspective on Christ begin to change?
- What were the final struggles that I went through before I accepted Him? Why did I finally decide to accept Christ (or give Him complete control of my life)?

4. Your Life After Coming to Christ

Share some of the changes that Christ has made in your life as they relate to your theme. Emphasize the changes in your character, attitude or perspective, not just changes in behavior. Be realistic. We still struggle as Christians. Life is far from perfect, but what's different about your life now? Think through these questions:

- How is my life different now? List some specific changes in your character, attitude and perspective on life.
- What motivates me now? What do I live for?

- Even though my life still is not perfect, how does knowing Christ help me deal with that fact?

5. The Closing

End with a statement that summarizes your story and connects everything back to your theme. If you want, close with a Bible verse that relates to your experience.

Congratulations! Once you've gone through the five steps above, you've outlined your personal testimony. Now, take a few minutes to write out your story as if you were telling it to someone. Here are some helpful hints to keep in mind as you do that:

- Pray before you write out and share your story. Ask God for wisdom and the words to say.
- Write the way you speak.
- Be honest.
- Aim to keep your story to three to five minutes. At that length, it's something you can share briefly in a conversation without it becoming a monologue.
- Practice your testimony out loud several times until you feel comfortable with it.

The Lord can use you to help others come to know Christ. Ask God for opportunities to share your story and the gospel with others.

* Taken from: Cru.org—"What Is a Christian Testimony?"

Appendix 3:

SOAP JOURNALING

As we read God's Word, we begin to see how God responds to things. Doing **daily devotions** re-patterns the way we think and transforms the spirit of the mind. Then, when we face similar situations as Jesus did, we begin to respond in the same way.

Journaling is an excellent way to both record and process what God has spoken to us. It's also a useful tool to use at a later time to reflect on and review some of the "gems" that you have received. Without writing these down, you may forget those blessings and some very important lessons!

S for Scripture
Open your Bible to today's reading on your Bible Reading Plan. Take time reading and allow God to speak to you. When you are done, look for a verse that spoke to you that day, and write it in your journal.

O for Observation
What is God saying in this scripture? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal the truth of this verse to you. Now write a one or two sentence observation about that verse. What does the verse say? What does it mean?

A for Application
Personalize what you have read, by asking yourself how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction, encouragement, revelation of a new promise, or correction for a particular area of your life. Now write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

P for Prayer
This can be as simple as asking God to help you apply this Scripture, or it may be a greater insight on what He may be revealing to you. Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say!

Don't forget to give your journal entry a title and put it in the Table of Contents. This will help you find it when you want to read it again.